

Re: Follow up to our discussion

Staudt, Richard <restaudt@seattleschools.org>

Fri 1/18/2019 7:19 AM

To: Neal Morton <nmorton@seattletimes.com>;

Cc: Robinson, Tim <tirobinson@seattleschools.org>;

Neal,

I am sorry. I assumed that Tim has already told you that an all schools report doesn't currently exist. He would have loved for us to have one we could provide to him and he pushed hard to see if there was any way we could get him one.

The data obviously come in school by school so that is how they are updated. The queries have come in school by school - "how's the water at my daughter's school?" - so that is the report format that has been built. It is possible to build an all schools report but, given the age of and the number of patches that have aggregated on the database, it will likely take 12-16 hours to build and test that report. It requires the work of both Shelly and one of the few people we have who still know that system.

Richard

From: Neal Morton <nmorton@seattletimes.com>

Sent: Thursday, January 17, 2019 5:57 PM

To: Staudt, Richard

Cc: Robinson, Tim

Subject: Re: Follow up to our discussion

Thanks, Richard.

I've been in Olympia most of today so will review this information later tonight or tomorrow and get back to you with any additional questions. I've also forwarded our email exchanges with my editor so she's aware of your concerns. I do not plan to publicly disseminate the detailed schematics of the schools.

Could you clarify what "all schools" report you think I was requesting Shelly create? I'm pretty sure the state's open records law does not give me the right to demand any public employees create a new record for me. I'm requesting the *existing* master spreadsheet or database that populates the results page for each school.

-Neal

From: Staudt, Richard <restaudt@seattleschools.org>

Sent: Thursday, January 17, 2019 1:42:27 PM

To: Neal Morton

Cc: Robinson, Tim

Subject: RE: Follow up to our discussion

Neal,

Back in the office, I had a chance to look at the reports and the maps of fixtures. Between Broadview-Thomson, Boren and Rainier Beach, one drinking water source failed our standard – fixture #21 (girls' gym) at Boren, which was disabled, according to our procedures. One other fixture (#30 at Rainier Beach – outside on the baseball field) was non-operational and is flagged to be re-tested if and when it returns to service.

All of the other failed fixtures are handwashing sinks, at which our procedure does call for posting a sign. While we do not test the handwashing sinks in restrooms, architects thought it a good idea to put in more classroom sinks in junior high schools back in the days that Broadview-Thomson and Boren were built. We don't want students to be drinking from those so we post the signs where appropriate to ensure there is no confusion.

I will send you over the school maps showing the locations of all the drinking water sources at each site, though I would ask that you hold those confidential. There is some concern about having full floor plans of our schools made widely available if anyone were wanting to cause trouble there. You will clearly see that every classroom at those sites is steps away from a good source of drinking water.

Sadly, this distinction between drinking water sources and classroom handwashing sinks is one of the key facts that we shared with Rachel that would have fundamentally changed her analysis (but likely not made it worthy of publication) had she taken the time to review her work after she had accurate information. When she, sitting with us in that conference room we shared yesterday, asserted that we had simply posted signs at failed drinking water sources, we went over a couple of the schools she mentioned. She looked at the list of fixtures with us and pointed to the PS notations, then acknowledged that those were all sinks (S) and not bubblers (B) or sink/bubbler (S/B) combinations, which are considered drinking water sources.

As you note, the single drinking water source that failed at West Seattle High was disabled. Shelly will follow up with the custodian at Ballard High to make sure the one failed fixture (a sink) that is currently marked "pending" did get its sign posted. Thanks for pointing that out to us.

The compiled "all schools" report is something that would take a good deal of Shelly's time to create and has never been requested before and so I can't see that it makes sense to pull her off her regular work to essentially work for you for the day. All of the data is on the website and, if you need to have someone compile it for you, I would suggest that it would be more appropriate for it to be someone on your payroll.

Regards,

Richard

From: Neal Morton <nmorton@seattletimes.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 17, 2019 9:42 AM
To: Staudt, Richard <restaudt@seattleschools.org>
Cc: Robinson, Tim <tirobinson@seattleschools.org>
Subject: Re: Follow up to our discussion

Appreciate the quick reply, Richard.

To save you some time, here's the results page for

Broadview: https://www.seattleschools.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_543/File/District/Departments/Risk%20Management/Water/Drinking%20Water%20Reports/Broadview.html As you can see on the most recent round of testing (in Table 2), two dozen fixtures failed the 10 ppb standard. The summary status for each only cites PS for post sign. Could you please share the master spreadsheet or any other database that details the remediation followed for each fixture?

Also, can you address what review, if any, you took at Broadview after a third of its fixtures failed the district's standard? Or, can you clarify what threshold of failures (50 percent? 75 percent?) you have that would trigger such a review?

Thank you,

-Neal

From: Staudt, Richard <restaudt@seattleschools.org>
Sent: Thursday, January 17, 2019 8:38:22 AM
To: Neal Morton
Cc: Robinson, Tim
Subject: Re: Follow up to our discussion

Neal,

I will be back in the office after noon and will try to figure out what it is that you are looking at that gives you such a mistaken impression. Rachel also was thinking that we had just posted signs at failed fixtures but that is not our practice. When pressed, she could not find any actual examples of that.

Richard

From: Neal Morton <nmorton@seattletimes.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 17, 2019 7:33 AM
To: Staudt, Richard
Cc: Robinson, Tim
Subject: Re: Follow up to our discussion

Good morning Richard,

My apologies for the confusion. As there's no school-specific data in the thesis, including the maps, we relied on the actual test results for each school posted on your website. I also reviewed the remediation listed for the failed fixtures with the highest level of lead at each school and noticed virtually all have "post sign." One fixture, at West Seattle High, actually looks like it was disabled. Another at Ballard High, tested in 2015, remains "pending."

Is it possible to get the master spreadsheet I requested earlier? Hopefully it would include a more thorough accounting of the remediation taken at each campus. With the exception of West Seattle High, the test results page do not indicate fixtures were disabled, replaced, etc. If the spreadsheet doesn't include that information, can you please share what remediation took place on the 24 failed fixtures at Broadview? Did your department conduct any additional review of that campus after 33 percent of its fixtures failed the 10 ppb standard, or is there a higher threshold necessary to trigger such a review?

And, my apologies again. I forgot to mention yesterday I did have an environmental researcher who works with a federal agency in New Mexico and a public health advocate in California review Rachel's thesis. They did not reach the conclusion that Rachel "just got it wrong" and shared their confidence that it was an analysis worth coverage.

Thanks,

-Neal

From: Staudt, Richard <restaudt@seattleschools.org>
Sent: Thursday, January 17, 2019 12:09:48 AM
To: Neal Morton
Cc: Robinson, Tim
Subject: Re: Follow up to our discussion

Hi Neal,

So if you and I can both clearly see that there are no failed fixtures at Bryant, how can Rachel put it on the map as the largest red dot on the 10ppb failure map? Knowing how much the Times loves maps, I imagine you were planning to use that one. I certainly hope that with Rachel not having opted to make corrections before publishing, you won't use it as is. Can you imagine how many alarmed Bryant parents would be calling both you and me saying "SPS data shows our school is really good, the Times says it is the worst, who is telling us the truth?" It won't make you or me or Rachel look good when we both have to put it a statement that says "Sorry, a student at the UW used the SPS data and just got it wrong". I think it behooves all of us to get it right before anything further is published.

And thank you for the suggestion that we add the Lead label to the Bryant report. You mentioned there were others that you found with a similar issue. We will check for those but if you have other examples, we would be glad to get to those first.

Regards,

Richard

From: Neal Morton <nmorton@seattletimes.com>
Sent: Wednesday, January 16, 2019 8:25 PM
To: Staudt, Richard
Cc: Robinson, Tim
Subject: Re: Follow up to our discussion

Hi Richard,

Thanks for these additional thoughts. I've shared them with Rachel to get her response when she and I chat in the morning. Hopefully she doesn't mind if I share her original research and data with you, since it seems to conflict with your interpretation of the map.

From the data she shared with me (and my checking against the test pages), Bryant has zero tests with levels of lead above the SPS limit. The school with the most failures is Broadview-Thomson, at 24 fixtures (a full third of the total tested). The next highest were Boren K-8 at 13 percent and Rainier Beach High at 11 percent. Does that conflict with what you see in each school's test results pages?

Also, I would point you back to the Bryant test results as an example of one of the school with no reference to what heavy metal is actually tested in each batch of results. I can't imagine a Bryant parent seeing that and immediately knowing whether they're reading results for cadmium or copper or lead. Broadview, meanwhile, does specifically label each table.

For the sake of accuracy and expediency, could you share any aggregated data or master spreadsheet that populates the test results pages? That way I can easily filter and search it for a more thorough comparison against Rachel's analysis, rather than clicking through every single school, scrolling down, etc.

Appreciate your help!

-Neal

From: Staudt, Richard <restaudt@seattleschools.org>
Sent: Wednesday, January 16, 2019 6:38:36 PM
To: Neal Morton
Cc: Robinson, Tim
Subject: Follow up to our discussion

Neal,

Something didn't sound right about your statement that Rachel was asserting that schools might have needed only one failure to count in the 53% and stood behind her 53% calculation. So I went back and looked again. She is flat wrong about her data in a number of areas.

Please take another look at Figure 1 in her report in which she shows schools with 6-11 percent and 12-33 percent of their single school's fixtures failing the 10ppb level in the past testing year. It is absolutely inaccurate. If you look at the biggest dot in the right hand chart, showing Bryant Elementary as having 12-33 percent of fixtures failing at 10 ppb, and compare that to the testing report from 2/3/2016, you can see the inaccuracy painfully clearly.

Here's the true information:

https://www.seattleschools.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_543/File/District/Departments/Risk%20Management/Water/Drinking%20Water%20Reports/Bryant.html

The highest lead concentration on the first draw was 3ppb (one fixture), there were two fixtures at 2ppb and three at 1ppb (out of 51). If you look at the flushed figures, recognizing the fact that on fixture 30 in the nurse's office Shelly clearly inverted the two columns, EVERY SINGLE FIXTURE was below 1 ppb. This school should show up as the very smallest dot on both the 10ppb and the 1 ppb charts, but it's the biggest on 10ppb. And she clearly

counted that school in the 53% of lower income schools that she cites. How can Rachel tell you with a straight face that her data are good when you can see at first glance that they are not?

This was the kind of error that we pointed out to her when she was here and were expecting that she would correct before she published her thesis. It is just one amongst many incorrect assumptions, faulty interpretations and questionable assertions that she makes. We might agree to disagree about methodology. She's free to assert that one "failed" fixture, immediately taken out of service and remediated, represents an environmental injustice, but she needs to base her conclusions on facts. We truly believed she understood this issue when we met and that she had committed to fix these kinds of problems.

I would again encourage you to talk with an experienced scientist working in the drinking water quality field before you rely on this thesis as the basis for anything you write. In addition to Simoni Triantafyllidou we have a local expert in Sheela Sathyanarayana from UW Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit, who might also be able to help you better understand the issue.

Richard Staudt

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